



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 1 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
1 APRIL 1968

1. North Vietnam

[redacted] Hanoi reports the Vietnamese Communists are organizing a broad offensive to take place in South Vietnam this summer. [redacted]

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[redacted] Hanoi expects the offensive to set the stage for a settlement on Communist terms and that the US will accept an "armistice" by early next year.

[redacted] report that a special mobilization of manpower is under way in North Vietnam to provide large numbers of new forces for the South.

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What appear to be eight more infiltration groups were discovered in Rear Services communications over the weekend, raising the number of units en route through central North Vietnam in March to 34, possibly 35. More than 17,000 troops could be involved.

2. South Vietnam

Vice President Ky, chief of the Joint General Staff Vien, and at least three of the four corps commanders plan to submit their resignations en masse unless Thieu resolves certain doubts and agrees to consult them closely on policy [redacted]

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These doubts include rumors that Thieu is embarking on wholesale personnel changes which would revive the influence of the southern Dai Viet party at the expense of the military hierarchy.

The commanders are already disturbed by Thieu's recent provincial appointments which they see as a substitution of Thieu's followers for their own protégés or as creating unrest among province chiefs and military officers in general.

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3. Panama

The Supreme Court will reconvene today to decide on the constitutionality of the Assembly's impeachment of Robles. No matter how the court rules, the situation is likely to deteriorate further.

The people around Arnulfo Arias are now working on more legal moves against the government, and are also keeping pressure on Robles and the National Guard through demonstrations and disorders. If the court invalidates the impeachment, Arias and company are prepared to impeach the court.

Pro-Arias demonstrators plan to be in the streets "to create an atmosphere of tension" while the court is deliberating. Influential families on both sides are becoming more and more convinced that a takeover by the guard is the only solution.

4. Brazil

Extremists have taken over the leadership of a major student demonstration planned for today in Rio. Large antigovernment demonstrations already have been held in most key Brazilian cities since the police killed a youth in Rio on Thursday.

The student leaders [redacted] plan to focus on the "repressive military dictatorship," but the US will also be a target. There is widespread sympathy for the students' cause.

There is already some evidence of military dissatisfaction with the government's failure to crack down on the students. If students and police clash again, military pressure on the government will probably build quickly.

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5. Cyprus

Prospects for talks between representatives of the Greek and Turkish communities are better now than at any time since the outbreak of violence in late 1963. Preliminary contacts between the two groups have been aided by the steady decrease in tension since last November. Much distrust remains, however, and no easy solution to the basic problems is in sight.

6. Egypt

Nasir, in a speech to the nation on Saturday, outlined a "program of action" to bring about political reform. We doubt that it will amount to much.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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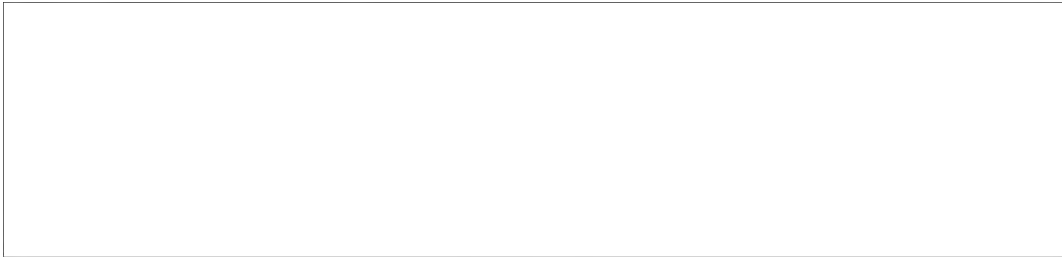
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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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North Vietnamese on Prisoners: Hanoi took pains to keep its policy of opposition to prisoner exchange intact in connection with the return of the three North Vietnamese sailors via Laos.

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Saturday the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issued a statement reiterating this position and denouncing "rumors" that the deal involved "contacts" or "talks" between American and North Vietnamese officials.

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Hanoi Denounced Operation CERTAIN VICTORY: Like earlier Viet Cong commentary, Hanoi radio on 31 March ridiculed "Operation CERTAIN VICTORY" as a desperate effort to take "growing pressure" off Saigon. The radio quoted the Viet Cong news agency as saying the allies absorbed more than 2,000 casualties in the first ten days of the operation. It said the size of the operation was deliberately exaggerated by putting a series of smaller operations under one name. This, it said, is just a "trick" by General Westmoreland to cover up his "incompetence" and "failure." The North Vietnamese party paper says the military situation around Saigon is a sign of "the new development" in the South and "proof" that the war is raging right outside the "biggest stronghold" of the US.

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Travel Notes: [redacted]

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[redacted] no signs of a change in popular morale since January, except for a temporary surge of enthusiasm at the start of the Tet offensive. (We know [redacted] that this was short-lived; people were dismayed to learn how greatly the regime had exaggerated Communist successes.) Other items noted [redacted]:

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--Sanitary conditions in Hanoi remain better than in Saigon.

--The average Hanoi resident appears adequately fed, but the rice ration for office workers was reduced in mid-March.

--People in service trades still refuse tips from foreigners.

--Foreigners have been detained for being in restricted areas recently, but the authorities still avoid spelling out which areas are off limits.

--Prostitution in Hanoi seems on the increase; Westerners have been propositioned on the streets during the day. One was approached in an air raid shelter. [redacted]

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Hanoi Crows over F-111 Losses: Vietnamese Communist propagandists have had a field day over the two F-111 losses. They quickly took credit for both and gloated over them as a "sadly embarrassing situation" for the US. Only three days after first being used to attack the North, said a domestic broadcast on 29 March, one of "those hodge-podge, noisily advertised planes" was downed "by our troops." This commentary even tossed in the issue of negotiations by charging that the "hasty decision" to use the F-111 in Vietnam "unmasked the peace negotiations" of the US. The item also used the old saw about people, not weapons, are decisive in war and claimed that because of the downing the US has "hastily cancelled" plans for the Navy version of the aircraft.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

*PDB
Special
Report
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Hanoi Quotes Roche Blast: The North Vietnamese international service on Sunday broadcast--without editorial comment, as usual--extensive passages from AID official Sidney Roche's "end-of-tour report." After passing mention of Roche's remarks on the pacification program and CIA's role therein, Hanoi came down hard on the more lurid aspects of Roche's allegations of South Vietnamese corruption. It noted in particular the charge that the proceeds of "vice strips" go into the "private coffers of the warlords." The broadcast also gave considerable play to Roche's allegations of the South Vietnamese Army's ineffectiveness.

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